

VZCZCXRO7865
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHLH #0733/01 3441443
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O P 101443Z DEC 07
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3542
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0015
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0065
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0218
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0569
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 1765
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 1455
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 4515
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4143

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000733

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [KFLO](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [AMGT](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: IT'S OFFICIAL--THE PML-N WILL COMPETE IN ELECTIONS

REF: (A) Lahore 715 (B) Lahore 722

CLASSIFIED BY: Michael T. Jordan, Acting Principal Officer,
AMCONSUL Lahore, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (S) On December 9 in Lahore the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) announced it will participate in upcoming elections in the wake of the failure of the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) to reach a consensus on whether or not to boycott the upcoming legislative elections. According to Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, a close confidant of Nawaz Sharif, the PML-N senior leadership felt it could not leave the field wide open to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), PML-Q and JUI-F to take a two-thirds majority of seats which would allow them to constitutionally ratify the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO) and other measures done under the state of emergency. In addition, Khan stated the election may actually be reasonably free and fair by Pakistani standards thanks to international pressure and efforts from the West, Saudi Arabia and even Chief of Army Staff Kayani. Finally he stated that Nawaz Sharif acknowledged the essential role the USG played in pressuring President Musharraf to step down as Army Chief and did not plan to play the anti-US card in his electoral campaign. End summary.

¶2. (C) At Nawaz Sharif's Model Town residence in Lahore yesterday, the All Parties Democratic Movement, a conglomeration of political and religious parties, failed to reach a consensus on whether to boycott elections scheduled for January 8. The key sticking point was the demand for President Musharraf to reinstate the pre-November 2 judiciary, a move all political commentators felt was extremely unlikely. In the end, the party leaders decided each party was free to make its own decision on whether to boycott. According to Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, a former member of the Punjab Provincial Assembly and close confidant of Nawaz Sharif, the senior leadership of the PML-N decided to compete to prevent the PML-Q, PPP and JUI-F from garnering a two-thirds majority of seats in the next National Assembly that would enable them to ratify the PCO and other measures enacted under the state of emergency. In addition, the party leadership felt it had no obligation to maintain APDM unity for an inflexible Imran Khan from the Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) party since it only had one seat in the prior assembly or to Qazi Hussain Ahmad of the Jamaat-i-Islami party since the majority of its seats were won in 2002 with support from the PML-N and his support several years ago limiting Prime Ministers to only two terms. Khan predicted both of those parties will in fact boycott primarily to save face in the certainty of poor

electoral performances.

13. (C) According to Khan, Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif did give serious consideration to boycotting after both of their nomination papers were rejected. Their strategy is to now campaign for their party to get out the vote for their candidates. They will also emphasize that they have nothing to gain personally since neither is a candidate and are doing this for the future of Pakistan. On the other hand, Khan admitted that Shahbaz and/or Nawaz may run in a by-election next year for any seats vacated by a PML-N candidate who wins multiple seats. Khan also stated that the Sharif brothers believe the elections may end up being reasonably free and fair by Pakistani standards owing to international pressure from the West, Saudi Arabia and Chief of Army Staff Kayani. Khan claimed the Saudis are applying enough pressure to Musharraf to ensure that the PML-N has a level playing field. He also said that the Sharif brothers recognized and appreciated the USG role in pressuring Musharraf to doff his uniform. He said that the PML-N does not plan to play the anti-American card in the upcoming campaign.

14. (S) According to Khan, he is acting as an intermediary on top secret issues between Military Intelligence (MI) and the Sharif

SIPDIS

brothers between Kayani and them. He stated that Kayani is disappointed that Musharraf did not move out of the Chief of Army Staff's residence in Rawalpindi after resigning from the Army and had it declared a Presidential residence. He also claimed that Kayani prefers Nawaz over Benazir Bhutto or likely PML-Q Prime Ministerial candidate Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and that a plan is in the works for Nawaz and Kayani to publicly meet next week that will in fact be a tacit endorsement. (Note-this is the first we have heard of this and we have no other source that confirmed this plan. End note)

15. (C) In other matters, Khan said that the Sharif brothers would still prefer to have elections postponed by one or two months to better prepare for them. He predicted in that case the PML-N could win a majority of seats in the Punjab Provincial

LAHORE 00000733 002 OF 002

Assembly as well as the National Assembly. As things stand now, he predicts there will be a hung parliament with the PML-N winning with a slight plurality. On reconciliation with the PML-Q, he stated that the Sharif brothers will not reconcile with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain or his cousin Pervaiz Elahi but that negotiations are underway with many PML-Q candidates to convince them to jump ship to the PML-N.

16. (S) Comment: PML-N leadership determined that it had a lot to lose by sitting out these elections. Notably, they are confident that elections will be reasonably free and fair thanks to international pressure. In addition, it is a positive sign that they see democratic elections as the best means to redressing their concerns rather than taking to the streets. End comment.

17. (U) Embassy Islamabad cleared on this cable.
JORDAN